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**THE JOB OF
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS
IN
SENIOR CITIZENS'
CLUBS**

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THE JOB OF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS IN SENIOR CITIZENS' CLUBS

CONTENTS	Page
Purpose	1
Let's Look at the Members	1
What Should our Club be Doing?	3
Leadership in a Group	4
The Committees	6
Formal Structure	8
The Officers	9
Order of Business	11
Meetings	12
Nominating Committee	12
The Constitution	12
Activities	13
What about Games?	15
You as an Officer	17



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If you have just taken office you may be wondering what

In any of these cases, the first thing to do is to think about

Purpose

When some of the loneliness has been dispelled through

Whatever special purpose a group of senior citizens may

Let's Look at the Members

members seem to enjoy some particular activity, it is not enough for the officers to assume that all the members want that activity and nothing else. Let's look at our club members and see how we can help them to carry out the purpose of the club. Perhaps we should look at the club's purpose and see whether it is in line with what the members think and feel.

Do you, as an officer, know the background of each member? What he did for a living? What his special interests are? How many members can play musical instruments? Who are the amateur actors? Knowing more about your members will help you to know what to expect of each of them. If a member has been in one job all his working life, you can expect him to be slower to adapt to changes.

Do all the members of the club understand the group's purpose and work together as a team? Are there some who always sit to one side?

Certainly it will do no good to push the quiet, stand-offish people into the club's activities, even though we realize there is therapy in group work — a therapy we all need at times.

The solution usually lies in approaching them each week until they finally reveal what their interests have been. Then that special interest may be used to bring them into the team. In one group a woman who had kept herself to herself for many meetings eventually admitted that she had done some writing. When she had been persuaded to write the story of the group for newspaper publication, her attitude toward the other members changed. She felt needed and ready to mingle and make friends.

The trouble in your club may not be with the shy ones, but rather with the aggressive people who want to tell everyone else what to do. One such person can disrupt the club if nothing is done about him. Let's look at these "bossy" people for a paragraph.

Psychologists tell us that, at bottom, their difficulty is the same as that of the too-quiet person — fear! Fear that no one really wants them, that they are not needed, leads to their aggressive approach to others, just as it does to the retirement of the timid. The "bossy" person is trying to prove he or she is needed — trying desperately to prove it to himself. Try to find for such a one a real job in the club, but a job in which he is not involved with too many people whom he might upset. Give him praise whenever he does work that is praiseworthy. You may be surprised to find that he gradually loses some of his aggressiveness if he feels secure and wanted.

These problems of special interests and personalities are the sort we see when we look at the members as individuals. There are still others when we look at the club as a whole.

What Should our Club be Doing?

As a team, what are you trying to accomplish, other than helping individual members? What are the strong points of your club, and what are its weaknesses?

If your group has been meeting only for recreation, would the addition of some other goal give it new life? Is your programme of recreation planned so that it will add to the health of the members?

Medical men who have made a study of old age have come up with the suggestion that if older people keep moderately active, both mentally and physically, they need never fear senility. If your club does nothing but play euchre, then as a club it is missing a great opportunity to help its members retain good health. If, along with the euchre games, the programme offers activities like shuffleboard, or dancing, your members will get the physical exercise they need. Then perhaps a quiz game or a spelling-bee can be used to stir the mental faculties.

How are you making your members feel needed?

Have you divided club work amongst committees so that nearly every member works on at least one committee? Working on real, challenging assignments is one way of involving members in team work, and also a way of helping them to feel useful.

The members' desire to help may also be channeled into service to the community in which you all live. Kits may be filled for the local united-appeal drive. Dressings may be made for the community hospital, or toys may be repaired for the children's aid organization. Even a scheme to help beautify the town with flowering shrubs and freshly painted public fences may be planned and carried out by senior citizens.

Carrying out such a club programme not only benefits its own members, but also helps to create in the community new attitudes toward old-age. The example of an active and interested group of older people helps the young and middle-aged to get rid of their tendency to think of their seniors as "fuddy-duddy".

When you have surveyed the members of your club as well as the purposes and programme offered, it is time for you to look at yourselves as officers and leaders.

Leadership in a Group

Audrey R. and Harleigh B. Trecker (Dean of the School of Social Work, University of Connecticut) speak of "seven central ideas about leadership" in their book Committee Common Sense. They say that LEADERSHIP

is a helping or enabling process,

is shared responsibility,

is a relationship between people,

depends on the situation,

is co-ordination of effort,

is fulfilment of purpose,
is a process of meeting human needs.

Let's look at these seven ideas one by one.

1. The best group leader works WITH the members and helps each one to carry out his individual responsibility toward the group's purpose. Such leaders find satisfaction in the group's accomplishment and the progress of the members rather than in ordering people about.

2. Many members of clubs and committees are capable of doing part of the job of leadership from time to time. The group will have more vitality if everyone takes his share of the responsibility and does not leave everything to the president or chairman and a few others.

3. The leader who works WITH people tries to understand his relationship to each member, and all the interactions that exist between members in the group. This understanding is the basis of his leadership.

4. When leadership is shared by all the members, the person best qualified to help the group do a particular job can be assigned the role of leader.

5. Effective leaders have the special skill of fitting the effort of each member into a co-ordinated whole.

6. It is the leader's job to keep the purpose clearly before the group, whether it is a committee learning the best way to do "friendly visiting", or an executive group drawing up a programme outline for the whole year.

7. All those who work in groups have two kinds of satisfaction — a shared sense of accomplishment when the group makes progress with its task, and also the personal feeling of significance that comes from carrying out a role in the group.

The most succesful leader is a warm, sensitive, out-going person who has learned to handle people in a democratic way. He does not order people around or do everything for them so that they become dependent on him. He should try to encourage the silent members to speak up. He should be an accepting person who respects the individual.

The Committees

After the officers are elected, they might at their first meeting decide what are the various needs of the club as a whole and, from there, go on to set up committees to look after those needs. Some of the usual committees are:

- Programme
- Refreshment
- Maintenance
- Welcoming
- Library
- Visiting
- Publicity

The PROGRAMME committee needs to be composed of people with ideas and ability to approach others about participation. A few clubs change their programme committee each month. In other clubs each group is appointed for a year. There is something to be said for each method. Changing every month encourages each succeeding committee to try to outdo the preceding ones. Naming a committee to act for the whole year gives the committee an opportunity to check with the members as to what type of programme best suits the majority, and allows for more careful planning and the introduction of greater variety.

REFRESHMENT committee members should not be required to serve for too long a period. When the members are busy in the

kitchen they miss many of the activities. The refreshment committee is often composed entirely of women, but they should get into the habit of calling on the men to help them serve, once the food is prepared.

The MAINTENANCE committee, on the other hand, is usually composed of men. After consulting with the programme committee, they should be on hand early to help arrange the chairs and tables. Two or three of the members should plan to stay to the end of the programme to tidy the room and leave it as they found it. This committee may also have to attend to a tired lamp or broken chair from time to time, if there is no building superintendent.

The WELCOMING committee should be composed of friendly people who stand at the door to welcome all the members and particularly the newcomers. A couple of members of this committee should be assigned to seeing that new members are introduced to the president and to their neighbours when they have taken their places.

The LIBRARY committee is a group of members in charge of distributing magazines and books under a carefully planned system. Records should be kept of what members have borrowed which books. Many of the members will be glad to contribute books and magazines to the club so that other members may enjoy them. Sometimes people in the community will pass on books and magazines to the club. The committee may arrange for small groups to discuss worthwhile books. Discussion groups will likely meet at one another's homes between regular club meetings.

The VISITING committee needs to be carefully selected for the type of personality that will be helpful to the sick or shut-in member. The Ontario Red Cross Society has a good training course on "friendly visiting" and supplies excellent manuals. The visiting committee would do well to inquire about the course.

At least the members should secure and use the manuals. They are available through your local branch of the Red Cross Society.

The PUBLICITY committee needs two types of people—those who know or can contact public officials, and those who can write a good report for the papers. The publicity committee should also be ready to explore the possibilities of TV and radio. This committee has the important job of being the liaison between the club and the public and, therefore, can do a great deal to help the public understand that added years do not necessarily mean lost wits.

SPECIAL committees may be assigned to jobs that are outside the scope of the standing committees. Occasionally some special event must be planned—a variety show, or bazaar perhaps. A special committee and even several sub-committees may be needed. This gives the executive the opportunity to involve new members who have not been assigned to a committee. They can be asked to look after special tasks—selling tickets, pricing articles, making costumes, and so on.

Formal Structure

Whether a club should formally elect officers will depend on whether the group expresses the desire to do so, and on the possibility of training leaders from within the club. As the purpose of a senior group is not usually to carry on a great deal of business, formal structure is not always necessary. Small groups can usually assume responsibility for their own programme, and what little business they do can be taken care of informally.

Formal structure may hinder rather than help them. One of the problems that can arise from formal structure, particularly when a group is not ready for it, is the development of a clique that decides everything for the group without actually getting the opinions of the members.

However, formal structure for some groups may be helpful for business meetings, and it must be remembered that modern applications of parliamentary procedure make for less rigid formal meetings and allow for a good deal of discussion.

The Officers

The most important thing when a group is newly formed is that the members become acquainted with each other and feel relaxed in the group. If after some time the members feel the business part of their meetings would go more smoothly if they used formal procedures, here is an outline of the usual officers and their duties. Elections may be held annually or semi-annually.

President

Vice-President (perhaps 1st, 2nd, 3rd)

Corresponding Secretary (Some clubs may also need an Assistant Corresponding Secretary.)

Recording Secretary (and perhaps also an Assistant Recording Secretary)

Treasurer (and Assistant Treasurer if one is needed)

Committee Chairmen (The chairmen of the standing and special committees are usually part of the executive.)

The PRESIDENT is the officer responsible for the conduct of business meetings or the business session of a gathering. His job is to see that the club's business is conducted efficiently and that everyone present understands the questions raised.

1. He calls the meeting to order. Then presents and secures agreement on the agenda.
2. He keeps carefully to the order of business agreed to.

3. He should avoid taking part in the discussion or expressing his own opinion. (The president does not vote unless to break a tie.)
4. His duty is to see that each member who wishes to speak is given the opportunity to do so.
5. He must see that each motion has a seconder, or that it is dropped. (A motion without a seconder must not be put to a vote.)
6. He should state the wording of the motion clearly and allow for adequate discussion before taking a vote.
7. When he has called for a vote he should announce the result (carried or defeated).

The first VICE-PRESIDENT assumes all the above responsibilities in the absence of the president. The first vice-president should consider himself to be in training to take over the presidency when necessary. Additional vice-presidents may be assigned special duties such as assisting the president, co-ordinating the work of committees, and so on.

The CORRESPONDING SECRETARY is in charge of all the correspondence of the organization. At each meeting he or she should be ready to report letters received since the last meeting and to read any of importance to the club.

The RECORDING SECRETARY takes the minutes of each meeting. The minute book should give a concise account of what was done. It should include reports of committees, and record any recommendations made. The minute book is the property of the organization and should be kept available for inspection by any member at any time.

The TREASURER should handle all the money of the organization, keep an account of membership fees, and an account of all receipts and disbursements in a proper book. The treasurer should submit a statement at each meeting. The books should be audited semi-annually.

Order of Business

A club may use any order of business that seems convenient and efficient, provided all the members present have agreed to it. The order of business for meetings is sometimes set out in the constitution. Here is the form it usually takes

1. The president (or committee chairman) calls the meeting to order.
2. The roll call by the secretary. If the meeting is large this item can be taken care of by passing the membership book for signing, or having it at the door.
3. The minutes should be read by the recording secretary and approved by the members, or the president may ask if the members wish the minutes read. If not, a member should move, and another member second, a motion that the minutes be taken as read.
4. Correspondence should be read by the corresponding secretary. Letters requiring action should be handed to the president. Any others may be filed without motion.
5. Business arising out of the minutes.
6. Unfinished business
7. New business (including a notice of motion if needed)
8. Announcements.
9. Adjournment.

Meetings

A formally organized club should hold regular business meetings. Notice of each meeting and the agenda to be used should be mailed to the members at least one week in advance of the meeting. About one-third of the members constitute a quorum.

There should be an annual or semi-annual meeting of the organization for the election of officers and for a review of the organization's operations.

Nominating Committee

A nominating committee of about five members may be appointed from the membership (by the members themselves) at least a month before the meeting for the election of officers. A nominating committee may prepare a slate of names, one or more for each office. After the nominating committee has read its report, the president should ask for further nominations from the members.

The use of a nominating committee is often found to be the best way of insuring a well-chosen list of nominees. But care must be taken that the members are given their democratic right to nominate any qualified person they choose.

The Constitution

For a social club a constitution may not be a necessity. A few rules of procedure will cover the need.

If a constitution is drafted, its articles usually set out

1. The name of the organization
2. The purpose of the organization
3. Who are eligible for membership
4. Membership fees
5. What officers are to be elected
6. Duties of officers
7. Meetings — regular and annual

8. Elections and the nominating committee
9. Order of business
10. Amendments

Many club constitutions may be amended by a majority vote at any meeting of the organization, provided that the proposed amendment has been given to the membership at least one month before it is formally presented and they are asked to vote on the question.

Activities

Clubs that regularly seek entertainment from outside their membership are missing a great deal. The occasional well-planned entertainment by good artists is excellent as a variation, but those who think older people want to sit passively and be entertained just don't understand people very well.

Clubs that do nothing but play cards are missing the boat. Cards are good fun, and one meeting in a month (where clubs meet weekly) might be a card party. Or the first hour of a club gathering might be devoted to the cards to satisfy the wishes of the card-loving members. Not all members enjoy card games. If only card-players seem to attend meetings, then it may mean they have driven away those who would like to do other things.

Some clubs go in for games that seem childish to the serious type of person and he may turn away in disappointment.

The programme committee's first task is to find out what all the members like to do. One of the best ways of doing that is to plan a series of meetings at which the members can try many different kinds of activities. Then the members may be asked to check off on a list their first, second and third choices. When the results have been tabulated, the programme committee can claim to know what the majority of the club members likes best.

From the minority, small groups can be formed to meet at times other than the regular club meetings to carry on the activities they most enjoy. For example, a group of members may be interested in sketching and painting. In addition to enjoying whatever activities are going on at regular meetings, they will meet to share their special interest another time. Eventually they will be able to help the club with an exhibition of their work and the club will rightly be proud of them.

In planning an afternoon or evening meeting the programme committee should insure a balanced programme — one that will include a physical activity such as dancing or musical chairs, and a quieter period of resting and enjoying a film, or a quiz game or a card game. There should be something to engage the mind as well as the body, and there should be an opportunity to mix with the whole club as well as a chance to talk with a special friend.

A good programme will stimulate the interest of the members —in their own well-being—in others—and in the community.

Programmes that will stimulate interest in the members' own well-being would include talks on nutritious meals, discussions of measures to avoid accidents, submissions for the local housing authority by members about the type of housing older people prefer. A committee that will provide members with information they need about medical services, hearing-aids and so on may be arranged.

Programmes that will stimulate interest in others might include arrangements for your club to meet other clubs; or projects such as repairing toys for the children's aid. Funds for favourite charities might be raised through bazaars or variety shows.

Interest in the community might be aroused by making plans to help beautify the town, or perhaps to help the town council in a special appeal, or with preparations for a special occasion such as a centennial. Often older people can help in a local museum,

cleaning articles for display, or acting as guards and guides.

The programme as a whole should include

LOOKING — at films, entertainments, demonstrations;

D O I N G — craft projects, games, singing, dancing;

G O I N G — on bus trips, to local industries, gardens,
on autumn-colour tours, excursions, sight-
seeing tours;

GIVING — contributing to the community, not neces-
sarily money, more often time, skill and
experience.

What about Games?

Team and relay games can be played sitting down if need be. Such games are helpful in getting the shy members to participate. Avoid games that require too much stooping.

Most librarians will have books of games and, if there is a recreation director in your area, he or she will be a good source of information about games.

Below is a summary of activities that might be carried on in a club of older people. The members should be given opportunities to decide on the type of activity they desire.

1. QUIET Games:

intellectual games — Twenty-Questions, Buzz;

paper-and-pencil games — When-I-Go-to-California, Things

table games — Anagrams, Telegrams, dice-and-board
games, Self-portraits, Bugs;

2. ACTIVE Games:

dance games — Pop-Goes-the-Weasel, Virginia Reel,
She'll-be-Coming-Round-the-Mountain;

- musical games — Musical Chairs and variations,
Broken-Twigs, Newspaper-March;
- contest for places — Parcel-Post, Poison, Spin-the-Platter,
Call-Ball;
- dramatic games — Charades, the Game, skits, When-my-
Ship-Comes-In;
- racing games — Hand-to-Hand-Race, Suitcase-Race;
- throwing at mark — horseshoe pitching, bowling, discing,
carpet bowls, bean-bag-board, quoits,
darts, Don't-Hit, Throwing-Cards;
- sense games and games requiring voluntary control
of muscles — Hide-the-Key, Silent-Circle,
Up-Jenkins, Hide-the-Clock,
Bean-Hunt, Who-Started-the-Motion;

3. CRAFT Activities:

- clay and plaster
- woodwork
- painting and drawing
- sewing, knitting, needlework
- leather
- coppercraft, jewellery, mosaics, china-painting
- millinery.

4. EXCURSIONS:

- museums and historical sites
- parks, country, lakes
- concerts
- industrial plants, etc.

5. EDUCATIONAL Programmes:

lectures and discussions on such subjects as
current events, budgeting on a small income,
nutrition, decline of hearing, eyesight conserva-
tion

book reviews

travelogue films or illustrated talks

social action

6. SPECIAL Projects:

outside entertainment

home talent

community services

visits to shut-ins

camping and holiday outings

You as an Officer

No matter what main purposes and goals your club may have, it will remain a lively organization just as long as each member gains some personal satisfactions through belonging to the group. That means that each member understands and identifies himself with what the group is trying to do, and finds something in the programme to meet his own interests and abilities.

As an officer you can contribute most by helping the members to

feel secure in their friendships with each other,
have adventures through the club,
know that they are recognized for their own abilities,
gain response and appreciation from other members.

